

In his essay John Lewis recalled how, when he was a little boy in Alabama, the threat of White supremacist violence and government-sanctioned terror was a fact of everyday life.

He also remembered the moment that changed his life: hearing a young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr., on the radio. From Dr. King's sermons he learned about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He also learned that when we tolerate injustice, we are complicit.

When we see something that is wrong, he wrote, "each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out."

John Lewis spent the next 65 years on Earth following Dr. King's teachings. I never met anyone in my life so unshakably committed to nonviolence and the transformative power of love.

There was another person who inspired John Lewis to spend his life getting into what he called "good trouble." He said he was inspired into the movement to end America's brutal history of race discrimination by the brutal death of Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955. When Emmett Till was brutally murdered for supposedly whistling at a White woman, he was only 14 years old. John Lewis was 15.

Emmett Till had traveled to Mississippi that summer to visit relatives from his home on the South Side of Chicago. When his body was returned to his grieving mother, Mamie Till, she made a decision that changed the world. She demanded that her son's coffin remain open at his funeral so that the world could see what hatred and racism had done to her only child.

Emmett Till's murder and Mamie Till's courage launched the civil rights movement of the mid-20th century. It was one of the greatest periods of racial reckoning in our Nation's history. Just 3 months later, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, AL, bus. She said that she thought of Emmett Till, and that courage covered her like a quilted blanket.

Earlier this month, the city of Chicago designated the home in which Emmett and Mamie Till lived as a city historical site. There are plans to preserve it as a museum.

Five years ago, the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture opened in Washington, DC. It represents America's first official attempt to tell the story of African Americans. But you don't have to go to a museum to see evidence of racial injustice in America or to see people bravely getting into "good trouble" for justice. You see that all around us.

Nine days before he died, weak from his chemo treatment, John Lewis made his last public appearance at the newly renamed Black Lives Matter Plaza in front of the White House. He explained the reason for his visit in his final letter to America. It begins with these words: "While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my

life you inspired me. You filled me with hope about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a difference in our society."

Lewis went on: "That is why I had to visit Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington. . . . I just had to see and feel it for myself that, after many years of silent witness, the truth is still marching on."

John Lewis drew a direct line from the civil rights movement to the Black Lives Matter protest of today, and he said: "Emmett Till was my George Floyd. He was my Rayshard Brooks, Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor."

As we celebrate this month, we can see the ravages of racial injustice in this pandemic, which has hit our Black and Brown brothers and sisters with a disproportionate ferocity. African Americans still live sicker and die younger in America. The average Black family still possesses only a fraction of the wealth of White families, even after a lifetime of backbreaking work. African Americans still face voter suppression and intimidation a half-century after John Lewis fought for voting rights.

Just weeks ago, White nationalists helped lead an armed insurrection against our democracy, and a man in that mob paraded a Confederate battle flag through the halls of this Capitol. We have work to do.

Truly, we have things to celebrate. Black history in America is a record of brutal subjugation, racial violence, and discrimination, but it is also the story of resilient people who survived those horrors and created a rich and vibrant culture. From Crispus Attucks, the first American who gave his life in the Revolutionary War, to Officer Eugene Goodman, one of the heroes in the January 6 insurrection; from Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman to Vice President KAMALA HARRIS; from the enslaved people who built this Capitol and the White House to Barack Obama, our first Black President; from John Lewis, the youngest speaker at the March on Washington, to Amanda Gordon, the youngest inaugural poet in our Nation's history, African Americans have enriched America in every field of thought and every walk of life and made us freer, more prosperous, and truer to our founding promises. I celebrate Black History Month.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS J. VILSACK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, tomorrow we are going to be taking up the nomination of former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack and former Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and now the nominee to be Secretary of Agriculture again.

I fully support this nomination. He has received support from farm and commodity groups across the country, but, more important to this Senator, he received praise from family farmers

in Iowa. However, a few critics of the former Iowa Governor have raised questions about his record on addressing racial inequities during his time as Secretary of Agriculture from 2009 until 2017. I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight.

I have long worked toward ensuring Black farmers receive justice for the decades of discrimination that occurred through many different administrations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, both Republican and Democratic.

People have often asked me why in the world a Senator from Iowa would get involved in this issue. While there aren't many Black farmers in Iowa, my State has a long history of fighting against oppression of African Americans dating to the Underground Railroad. There is no reason to stop that trend.

In my first discussion with then-to-be Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack in 2009, I brought up my work in what is called the Pigford consent decree. A provision I led in the 2008 farm bill enabled more Black farmers to bring their claims forward and authorized the U.S. Department of Agriculture \$100 million for additional settlements.

Mr. Vilsack at that time, talking to me privately, vowed then to work closely with me and other Senators on issues and then immediately got to work doing just that, helping Black farmers. Under the leadership of Secretary Vilsack, the U.S. Department of Agriculture discovered that the \$100 million at that time appropriated wasn't enough to cover the settlements that Black farmers were entitled to under that consent decree, so in 2010, part of Secretary Vilsack's budget request included over \$1 billion to ensure a robust settlement for all Black farmers who were discriminated against for the previous two or three decades. The Claims Resolution Act was signed by President Obama in December 2010 and implemented successfully by Secretary Vilsack.

Besides the Pigford settlements, a top priority during Secretary Vilsack's previous tenure was ensuring a comprehensive plan to improve the USDA's record on civil rights, and that record on civil rights wasn't very good based upon what I have already said about the Pigford case but in a lot of other areas as well. Secretary Vilsack made it clear to all employees that discrimination of any form would not be tolerated at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

My support for justice for those who have faced discrimination remains constant, and I am looking forward to working with Secretary Vilsack and leaders in the Congress to ensure equal rights for every farmer and family in this country.

I am glad to have the opportunity to set the record straight on Secretary Tom Vilsack's solid record in pursuing justice for victims of discrimination.

Mr. Vilsack is the right person for this job. I know that Secretary Vilsack

will continue to work for family farmers and spotlight those farmers' contributions to agriculture and what agriculture does for society as a whole. As an Iowan, that is part of Mr. Vilsack's very nature.

I urge my colleagues to confirm Secretary Vilsack once again so that the Department of Agriculture has the necessary leadership in place to continue the important work, and that is, supporting those who feed and fuel the country and, indirectly, a lot of people around the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote on Linda Thomas-Greenfield's nomination to be Ambassador to the United Nations. I will oppose her nomination.

The United Nations is a troubled institution. Too often, the U.N. is, at its best, a feckless debating society, but at worst—and that is more common, sadly—an apologist for tyranny, corruption, and hypocrisy.

Our Ambassador must give voice to our interests, priorities, and the conscience of the United States and regularly confront our enemies on the world stage. This position requires foresight, judgment, and courage, the courage to speak truth in a den of liars.

Unfortunately, Ms. Thomas-Greenfield hasn't demonstrated these qualities when it comes to the world's most notorious liar: Communist China.

Little more than a year ago, Ms. Thomas-Greenfield delivered a speech at a China-funded Confucius Institute at Savannah State University. In her remarks, she could have condemned China's economic regression, denounced China for flooding our streets with deadly drugs like fentanyl, objected to their ethnic cleansing of Uighurs and Tibetans, called for Beijing to uphold its international commitments to Hong Kong's autonomy, or criticized their predatory lending practices in Africa.

Instead, she praised China. She excused their behavior in Africa and said there is much the United States can learn from China. It is beyond me how anyone, especially a seasoned diplomat, could utter such a grotesque line. America has nothing to learn from a genocidal, Communist tyranny.

She excused China's debt-trap diplomacy and said she could "see no reason" why China couldn't help spread values that included "good governance, gender equity, and the rule of law." Gender equity? Would that include China's barbaric one-child policy, which

led to the elimination of millions of unborn girls over decades of sex-selective abortion or China's policy of systematic rape of religious and ethnic minority women in Xinjiang Province? Gender equity, indeed.

She showed a similar lack of tact and understanding on the subject of trade with China. She asserted that the United States and China should simply "come to an understanding" without uttering a sentence, not a word, not even a syllable of criticism of China's unrestricted and illegal economic aggression against our workers and our companies.

She also asserted that "we are not in a [new] Cold War" with China. This statement, along with the rest of her speech, shows a strategic blindness that is disqualifying for a senior foreign policy post.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield has expressed regret for her speech, and some people say a single speech shouldn't define an entire career, but this isn't some ancient speech dug up from a long-lost era by political opponents. She gave it just 16 months ago. The whole world knew—and certainly a career diplomat would have known—about China's long, dark, lamentable catalog of crimes against America, international order and stability, and its own people.

And these remarks were not isolated mistakes or a slip of the tongue. This nominee has spent years minimizing the threat of China's actions in Africa and has spoken repeatedly in favor—in favor of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is a transparent ploy to spread Communist Chinese influence into other countries.

And the Biden administration's attempts to excuse this speech have done her no favors. After her speech came to light, President Biden's transition team stated that Ms. Thomas-Greenfield was "repulsed" by what she saw at the Confucius Institute. Really? Repulsed? If that were true, why didn't she speak out then? Why did she keep the money from the speech?

Either President Biden's team is misleading the public or this nominee failed to speak up when it mattered most on another occasion. Neither possibility reflects favorably on the administration or the nominee.

To be honest, I doubt that Ms. Thomas-Greenfield or the administration are particularly "repulsed" by Confucius Institutes. That is why, after all, in his first week in office, President Biden withdrew a rule that would force universities to disclose their secret agreements with Confucius Institutes.

This was an unnecessary, undeserved, and unwise gift to China, as well as a payoff to higher education, a client and a patron of the Democratic Party. Many colleges have become addicted to Chinese Communist money, and the Biden administration isn't about to shut off that gravy train. After all, Joe Biden's son Hunter takes Chinese money, so how could he object to liberal universities taking Chinese money?

I will conclude by saying that in the last month, we have witnessed a gradual erosion of America's resolve in confronting China. This nomination is just another signal of weakness to Beijing. Supporters of Ms. Thomas-Greenfield's nomination can pretend that this dove has talons, but any fairminded observer, and especially those in Beijing, know that is not true. I will oppose the nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise today to support the nomination of Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield as U.S. Representative to the United Nations, the Security Council, and the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's impressive career in public service makes her uniquely and eminently qualified for this role. For over 35 years, she has served this country faithfully and ably, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, in senior Senate-confirmed positions such as Ambassador to Liberia, Director General of the Foreign Service, and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield understands at her core that foreign policy is about forging connections and building relationships. So I have no doubt that what she calls her personal brand of "gumbo diplomacy," which emphasizes connecting with others to solve problems, will be of tremendous service to the United States at an institution like the United Nations, where personal relationships matter a great deal.

Our country is truly fortunate that the Ambassador has agreed to return to public service, especially at this critical moment. We face an array of formidable challenges, both around the world and at the U.N., that demand someone with her skills and commitment to democracy, good governance, human rights, and anti-corruption.

Over the last 4 years, the United States has accrued more than \$1 billion in peacekeeping arrears, tried to pull out of the World Health Organization in the middle of a pandemic, undermined international protections for women, girls, and LGBTI individuals, defunded or cut funding to key agencies like the U.N. Population Fund and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and pulled out of the Paris climate agreement.

Meanwhile, China and other authoritarian countries have filled the vacuum left by our absence. We must regain U.S. leverage and influence at the Security Council, where Russia and China